

NEW GARDEN COMMUNITIES PROSPECTUS







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New settlements and major urban extensions are a potential way to help meet the housing challenge the borough faces.

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New Garden Communities - an introduction

New settlements and major urban extensions are a potential way to help meet the housing challenge the borough faces.

We are inviting developers and landowners to put forward proposals for a new garden communities as part of the current Call for Sites exercise.

Reasons why a new garden community could be part of the Local Plan Review (benefits)

- Local drivers – housing numbers
- National drivers – boosting housing supply

This prospectus does not signal that the council is committing to a specific way of meeting the housing challenge at this early stage of the Local Plan Review; all reasonable options are on the table at this point. But we are keen to receive submissions on potential new garden communities as part of our overall Call for Sites, recognising that the 2018 NPPF specifically highlights the role that such an approach can play in areas of high housing demand like Maidstone.

New garden communities need to be of a sufficient scale of deliver meaningful supporting infrastructure. The Government defines 'garden villages' as being of between 1,500 and 10,000 homes and 'garden towns' as being of 10,000+ homes . They can be new, freestanding settlements or a new neighbourhood created through a major extension to an existing urban area. In either case, they are areas which are comprehensively planned and co-ordinated from the outset where the new homes will be built over an extended number of years, resulting in a significant number of new homes overall. They also offer the prospect of achieving mixed, balance communities through the supply of a range of types and tenures of housing and a highly integrated approach to the provision of supporting infrastructure, facilities and mix of uses. This integration, co-ordination and delivery-focus is likely to be best achieved by taking a masterplanning approach to the delivery of the new garden community.

The Government has an inspirational view of what garden communities can be ;

“We want to see vibrant, mixed use communities where people can live, work and play for generations to come – communities which view themselves as the conservation areas of the future. Each will be holistically planned, self-sustaining and characterful.”

“A Garden City is a holistically planned new settlement which enhances the natural environment and offers high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities.

The Town & Country Planning Association has devised the following ‘Garden city principles’7

“A Garden City is a holistically planned new settlement which enhances the natural environment and offers high-quality affordable housing and locally accessible work in beautiful, healthy and sociable communities. The Garden City Principles are an indivisible and interlocking framework for their delivery, and include:

- Land value capture for the benefit of the community.
- Strong vision, leadership and community engagement.
- Community ownership of land and long-term stewardship of assets.
- Mixed-tenure homes and housing types that are genuinely affordable.
- A wide range of local jobs in the Garden City within easy commuting distance of homes.
- Beautifully and imaginatively designed homes with gardens, combining the best of town and country to create healthy communities, and including opportunities to grow food.
- Development that enhances the natural environment, providing a comprehensive green infrastructure network and net biodiversity gains, and that uses zero-carbon and energy-positive technology to ensure climate resilience.
- Strong cultural, recreational and shopping facilities in walkable, vibrant, sociable neighbourhoods.
- Integrated and accessible transport systems, with walking, cycling and public transport designed to be the most attractive forms of local transport.”

Picture Caption





Developing some of these themes a little further and applying them to the Maidstone context...

The council will expect the land value uplift to be used to fund essential infrastructure and an important dimension will be how the developer/landowner will work with the council in this regard. The homes will be delivered through clear partnership arrangements to capture land value to secure all necessary infrastructure. Local community engagement, involvement and support is also likely to be instrumental to delivering a successful proposal where those people most closely impacted by the new garden community proposal can have a true sense of the benefits that the development will bring and a meaningful influence on the specific details of the proposal. The council would also want and need to take a role as community leader – in addition to its regulatory role as planning authority – to advocate for the new garden community (or communities) both locally and more widely, in particular with funding bodies.

An important aspect to achieving a mixed and balanced community will be ensuring that the new homes match the diversity of local needs and offer variety and choice, including in terms of affordability and tenure. This will include specialist provision in response to evidenced needs – such as housing for the elderly – as well as serviced plots for custom and self build and Gypsy & Traveller pitches.

A successful garden community is likely to contain a genuine mix of uses. Providing land for employment floorspace can mean that some residents will be able to work locally. As well as a local centre with a range of local shops, services and facilities; leisure and community uses; open space; formal recreation space and sports facilities. Education. Supporting facilities that the residents will need – schools, health centres, sports and leisure, community buildings,

“We want to see vibrant, mixed use communities where people can live, work and play for generations to come – communities which view themselves as the conservation areas of the future. Each will be holistically planned, self-sustaining and characterful.”